

Clemson Livestock Poultry Health as the animal health authority in South Carolina appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed timeline and programs standards for NAIS. We look forward to working with USDA as an equal partner in the implementation of NAIS in South Carolina. Following this we have offered comments in response to the questions specifically asked by USDA. We have these additional observations and suggestions in addition to the ones addressed by the questions.

- SC has been pleased to work with USDA in perfecting an XML data transfer method for the SPRS system. We feel that this model of cooperation between the states and USDA accomplishes far more for the industry in a shorter amount of time than the more rigid approach we have encountered in working through processing exception requests for premises identification numbers. The state animal health authorities are the most likely to be familiar with the situation on the ground in their respective states. We recognize the importance of assuring that a premises is registered only once with one number and certainly efforts to educate and monitor that process in the states are appropriate. Mistakes will be made no matter who is handling the exceptions – the goal is to minimize them. The state animal health authority is given the responsibility for premises registration under NAIS and is in a much better position to be familiar with the specific circumstance on the ground than one person at the federal level. U.S. It appears to us that more reliance on accurate geo coordinates or FSA farm numbers offer an improved system over time.
- When using geo coordinates, adequate metadata must be included. Precision of measurement or estimation is essential. The SPRS has been replacing coordinates measured to approximately 50 ft precision with ones estimated to zip code centroid. Centroids may be useful in some applications, but not for premises identification. Similarly metadata on coordinate system, datum, etc., need to be included. We have found cases of degrees, minutes, and seconds recorded as decimal degrees and so on.
- While 911 addresses for premises registration is a valid procedure, using only active postal addresses unnecessarily increases the number of exceptions that are required.
- The latest draft we have seen of the procedure to allow states to process their own exceptions is unnecessarily burdensome and could be seen as an attempt to prevent any state from handling their own exceptions. This process should adopt more of a partnership model instead of the current master/slave model.
- The person who is in control of the animals located at a premises should be the person responsible for registering that premises. References to owner of premises should be removed. As an example, a 95 year old widow in a nursing home who owns a farm is not likely to register that premises nor should she. The person renting that farm is the person relevant to NAIS. We have discovered in our educational efforts that when we talk about needing to know “which animals are where” and “who do we call,” NAIS is more readily accepted than when we talk about ownership. The mention of ownership seems to bring up issues of confidentiality (IRS, Dept of Health, FDA).

1. The Draft Strategic Plan calls for making the entire system mandatory by January 2009. Is a mandatory identification program necessary to achieve a successful animal disease surveillance, monitoring, and response system to support Federal animal health programs? Please explain why or why not.
 - ✓ For the goal of 48 hour trace to be met, compliance will have to approach 99+%. Mandatory seems to be the only option to achieve compliance at this level. 80% compliance through a voluntary program is likely to result in a failure of successful trace if any premises or animals are from the non-participating 20%, thereby greatly reducing the usefulness of the efforts of the participating 80%.
2. In the current Draft Strategic Plan, the NAIS would require that producers be responsible for having their animals identified before the animals move to a premises where they are to be commingled with other animals, such as a sale barn. At what point and how should compliance be ensured? For example, should market managers, fair managers, etc., be responsible for ensuring compliance with this requirement before animals are unloaded at their facility or event? Please give the reasons for your response.
 - ✓ The only choice seems to be to assign the responsibility to the receiving premises (e.g. market managers, fair managers, etc.) to either prevent unloading or accept responsibility as a tagging site to apply required identification and supporting reporting.
3. In regard to cattle, individual identification would be achieved with an AIN tag that would be attached to the animal's left ear. It is acknowledged that some producers do not have the facilities to tag their animals; thus, the Draft Program Standards document contains an option for tagging sites, which are authorized premises where owners or persons responsible for cattle could have the cattle sent to have AIN tags applied. Do you think this is a viable option, i.e., can markets or other locations successfully provide this service to producers who are unable to tag their cattle at their farms? Please give the reasons for your response.
 - ✓ Tagging sites and tagging services are not only a viable option but will prove to be a very necessary option especially for some of the small producers in SC. The feedback we have received from producers in our educational efforts indicate a significant level of interest in these services.
4. The current Draft Strategic Plan does not specify how compliance with identification and movement reporting requirements will be achieved when the sale is direct between a buyer and seller (or through their agents). In what manner should compliance with these requirements be achieved? Who should be responsible for meeting these requirements? How can these types of transactions be inputted into the NAIS to obtain the necessary information in the least costly, most efficient manner?
 - ✓ The states should have the responsibility and authority to develop strategies and procedures to ensure compliance that are appropriate to their unique circumstances and resources available for this effort. Obviously, educating

producers who might purchase unidentified cattle that at the very least they are accepting full responsibility for such animals as if they were born on their premises is an integral step.

5. USDA suggests that animals should be identified anytime prior to entering commerce or being commingled with animals from other premises. Is this recommendation adequate to achieve timely traceback capabilities to support animal health programs or should a timeframe (age limit) for identifying the animals be considered? Please give the reasons for your response. Are the timelines for implementing the NAIS, as discussed in the Draft Strategic Plan, realistic, too aggressive (i.e., allow too little time), or not aggressive enough (i.e., do not ensure that the NAIS will be implemented in a timely manner)? Please give the reasons for your response.
 - ✓ At this stage, the fact that cattle producers can be told that if an animal is born on their farms and never leave - NAIS will not require them to tag those animals has been vital in gaining producer acceptance of the necessity of the NAIS. While age verification is desirable and may enhance add-on marketability programs, the benefit of requiring it for animal disease tracing is small compared to the cost in public support. Encouraging voluntary reporting of birth information would be desirable. While the timeline may seem a little slow, the regulatory process is by design very slow. Unfortunately our experience with the SPRS and the time it is taking to make vital changes to its support and programming indicate that even this timeline will be a challenge to meet on the federal side. The proposed state level of compliance plan inappropriately shifts the blame and the burden to the states for any delays in implementing NAIS. At present, in almost every phase, current delays have come from the federal government and its bureaucratic red tape.
6. Should requirements for all species be implemented within the same timelines, or should some flexibility be allowed? Please give the reasons for your response.
 - ✓ If states are going to be asked to promulgate regulations and/or change laws, then it would be preferable to have the means of identification for each species and the timeframe for each known at the time changes to laws and regulations are proposed. The more species that are left unresolved - the more confusion and therefore resistance we are likely to experience in implementing NAIS.
7. What are the most cost-effective and efficient ways for submitting information to the database (entered via the Internet, file transfer from a herd-management computer system, mail, phone, third-party submission of data)? Does the type of entity (e.g., producer, market, slaughterhouse), the size of the entity, or other factors make some methods for information submission more or less practical, costly, or efficient? Please provide supporting information if possible.
 - ✓ As many options as possible the better. One size rarely fits all for convenience or cost. The key is to define the information content and then stick to that definition. For example: If a field length is defined as 30 characters, all methods should enforce that limit. Once the content is

standardized, the actual transfer can be HTTP, XML, and other formats as needed without hurting interoperability. The smaller entities will want to be able to enter data without purchase of additional software. Larger entities will need to be able to submit data from their enterprise management software without duplicate data entry.

8. We are aware that many producers are concerned about the confidentiality of the information collected in the NAIS. Given the information identified in the draft documents, what specific information do you believe should be protected from disclosure and why?
 - ✓ All specific producer information should be shielded. The purpose of FOIA laws should be to make how government goes about its business transparent – not to give out information on private citizens (producers).
9. The NAIS as planned would require States, producers, and other participating entities to provide information and develop and maintain records. How could we best minimize the burden associated with these requirements? For example, should both the seller and the buyer of a specific group of animals report the movement of the animals, or is reporting by one party adequate?
 - ✓ The current plan to require the buyer and recommend to the seller that they report animal movements seems like a balanced approach. This allows a small producer to register his premises, purchase and apply tags, and sell his animals without the need to report any movements (and require an electronic reader). The current federal draft proposal on certifying states to process their own exceptions is an example of bureaucratic overkill designed to prevent a state from becoming certified and leaving one person in the federal government with an iron grip on the exception process.
10. How should a private database system be funded? Please give the reasons for your response.
 - ✓ The only way to ensure immediate and constant access required for animal disease and emergency traces is for this information to be in one federally held database. This information should be exempted from FOIA requests and should only contain the minimum information required by NAIS. Private databases should push the required information to the federal database on a real time basis. Producers should have the option of submitting this minimally required information directly themselves or contracting with a private database/service to perform this function on their behalf. Under this plan, the people who use the private database would pay for it.
11. Should the NAIS allow for multiple privately managed databases? Please explain why or why not.
 - ✓ Yes (under the outline listed above of essential health information in a federally controlled database) – multiple privately managed databases would allow producers to choose from multiple value added services to meet their

individual needs. This also allows for competition in the marketplace between private database providers to improve cost efficiency for producers.

12. Should a public (government) system be made available as well as a privately managed system so that producers would have a choice? Please give the reasons for your response.
 - ✓ Yes, it is important for a producer to be able to meet the minimum requirements of NAIS without having to incur extra expense to report required data. Those who want the value added features offered by a private system and/or the possible convenience of a private system would be free to use them and pay for that choice.
13. Should a privately managed system include all species? Please give the reasons for your response.
 - ✓ As long as the essential information is pushed to a federally held database as recommended above and outlined in the NAIS drafts, then private databases should be free to configure their species offerings as broadly or narrowly as their business plan will support.
14. Would either system work equally well at the State level? Please explain why or why not.
 - ✓ The animal movement information is inherently tied eventually to interstate commerce and therefore should be primarily federal responsibility due to the need to trace across state lines without delay. The intrastate movements are an important piece and the states should play a supporting role in supervising and enforcing the collection of this data. The right of each state to regulate livestock crossing its borders must be respected and preserved.